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## OUR FOUNDATION

By EMERITUS PROFESSOR E. R. HOLME

ON July 10th, 1923, the Australian English Association was founded. The past twenty years enclose an era in its history, linking it with the long life and great work of Mungo William MacCallum, Challis Professor of Modern Literature in the University of Sydney for thirty-five years and, then, for twenty years more, an Emeritus Professor, and an Honorary Professor of English Literature. He died, on September 3rd, 1942, Life President of the Association since its foundation. Its presidency had been to him not merely an honour, but an obligation to help in the attainment of its objects. Help like his was an inspiration. Now that it has ceased, the Association has made a sort of new beginning. For that it has the advantage of being a part of the whole MacCallum tradition. The only Life President will be followed by a series of ordinary presidents who will benefit as they can from his memory and from consciousness of their duty to study and apply his example in their own efforts. From that example the Association largely originated, in Australia.

Before Foundation Day, there was much question raised over the choice of a name for a new society intended to further the study of English. On that day, it was unanimously called "*The Australian English Association*" and yet made to offer itself as an active constituent of "*The English Association*" established in England many years before and enjoying a high prestige everywhere English literature and scholarship were valued. Some courage was needed to insist on the word "*Australian*". It looked too much like a piece of intrusive local patriotism, and there were some intending members who indeed possessed a doubtful form of a good feeling. It might have raised objections in the body to which affiliation was to be sought. It actually did provoke some witticisms of the kind that hyphenated '*Australian*' with '*English*' and ended in a smile of superiority. But no harm ever came of the title. The good in it prevailed. It was intended as part of the honour shown to the Life President. He more than any other

had instituted modern literary studies in Australia. He had become the acknowledged master of English literary learning and criticism there. The new Society was to form round him, the British scholar and man of letters who had given himself, entirely, to a lifetime of work for Australian literary culture, as his own contribution to the tasks of empire. It was made 'Australian', therefore, most appropriately, as well as 'English', and "for the maistrie"—the good old phrase meaning not only "into the bargain" but also "as further sign of worth", in this case the worth of an imperial self-consciousness. To have formed a "MacCallum Association" with similar purposes would have been easy enough. There were hosts of his students and of others, filled with admiration of his work and with due gratitude, to constitute a large membership. But no one would have dared to face him with proposals for what Browning had called (without stopping it) a "Me Society". That "Australian" in the title was welcome to him in his piety of national service. He promised to be President.

The members of the Association hoped to do something for him as well as for English studies. He had retired from his Chair earlier than was required by University practice. But he knew that a Chair of Modern Literature could not be perpetual and that Chairs of French and German, at least, were necessary. He made way at the right time and eliminated himself. There was a risk for him in that—it meant the loss of familiar and joyful work, of good company and much incidental occupation. His friends feared for his health after such a change. But Fate wrought one of its ironies and he became urgently needed by the University in other capacities. Soon after he had been made an Emeritus and an Honorary Professor teaching, when he felt inclined, the classes still eager for him in English, he was called to act as the University's chief administrative officer, first as Warden and ultimately as executive Vice-Chancellor. While occupying his Chair he had been elected and regularly re-elected Dean of the Faculty of Arts. As such he was a member of Senate, the Governing Body of the University. When retirement ended his Deanship, the Graduates of the whole University called him to be one of their almost unanimously elected representatives

on the Senate. By it he was chosen, first, Deputy Chancellor and finally Chancellor. At the age of eighty he insisted, again, on retiring from office. He had spent most of the nineteen years of his Life Presidency in directive and executive work for the University of importance hardly less than that of his Professorship. So the safeguard that the Association might have been for him personally was not ever needed.

At its Inauguration, both the urgent literary purpose and the opportunity it gave for honouring and safeguarding the beloved man combined to bring the nascent society an extraordinarily warm welcome. This found easiest and most appropriate expression during that notable literary event, the visit of Mr. J. W. Mackail, a Fellow of the British Academy, a former Professor of Poetry at Oxford and a famous critic of both classical and English literature. His work was well-known here. Interest rose very high round the two great students and interpreters of literature, Mackail and MacCallum. The engagement of Mackail by the University Extension Board for a series of lectures in Sydney was adapted to the need for an inaugural meeting of the proposed Australian English Association and for both the Great Hall of the University held the largest general audience it had ever known upon an occasion when the cause of assembly was altogether literary. It was a memorable moment when His Excellency the Governor-General, Lord Forster, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Dr. Purser, the eminent guest, Professor Mackail, and Professor MacCallum stood on the dais, with the others there, after all the people in the body of the Great Hall had carried unanimously and with acclamation the resolutions supported by Dr. Mackail himself founding the Australian English Association and beginning its Life Presidency. The business of the meeting was not only that but, following that, to hear a lecture on Shakespeare, the substance of which may be read in Mackail's published work. To the audience, the Shakespearian criticism of MacCallum was the cause already of a searching of the Shakespeare scriptures with profit and delight whose renewal by Mackail, with his own interpretative power, held all present in deep attentiveness, and lifted them to new enthusiasm for the old exhaustless subject.

When the Inaugural Meeting had been over for only a few weeks the membership of the Association was over six hundred. The records may contain a higher total after that. But numbers are not proof of value, though they do show good will for a high purpose. The hard road of approach to permanence of effort and to the endless gathering of evidence that proves usefulness, was followed with success so long as the Life President was in office. He is gone. The gap cannot be filled. But the work can go on and he can be, if absent in body, present in spirit, at least so long as those who knew him and learnt from him remain.

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### WINDFALL APPLES

Evening over the tops of many grasses  
Is a galah's wing flaked with pink and grey,  
Feather on feather folding into darkness.

And glowing crimson under heavy branches  
The apples rot in a sweet cidery shadow,  
Felled by a wind that was not of their desiring.

Fallen to a no-man's land netted and fenced with blackberries,  
(Evil, these knuckles, clenched in aggressive darkness)  
Barbed with thorns and twisted over the dying—

So that the hand must be brave that goes enquiring  
For the rotting apples in grasses brittle, and bracken,  
Some to be saved and some to be shovelled and buried.

And I remember how grief enduring many seasons  
Of morning frosts, of suns too hot and eager  
Was fallen at last to a no-man's land, and after  
Shovelled to an unquiet grave.

ROSEMARY DOBSON.

MR. C. S. LEWIS AND *PARADISE LOST*:  
THE PROBLEM OF APPROACH

By A. J. A. WALDOCK

EVERY serious study of *Paradise Lost* is an attempt to recover the epic that Milton wrote. The latest of such attempts—a very brilliant essay—is Mr. C. S. Lewis's *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. Mr. Lewis (whom nearly everyone must know by now as a critic of real distinction) has brought us as close, one feels, to an understanding of what Milton *meant* as perhaps anyone now can bring us. For one thing, he is more in sympathy with Milton's religious beliefs than most modern critics are, and this, as he says, is an advantage. (What, he asks, would the reader of Lucretius not give to have a real live Epicurean at his elbow?) It is an advantage in some ways—not in all ways; for Mr. Lewis, I think, is almost too sympathetic with *Paradise Lost* to see it as it really is. He understands very well what Milton intended; he does not seem to me to understand nearly so well what Milton achieved. His contention, indeed, is that once Milton's purposes have been thoroughly grasped, nearly every important ground of objection against the poem disappears. Find out what Milton was driving at, he says, and all comes right. I do not think he has a chance of proving his case.

Let us consider, first, the interesting question of "dating". Mr. Bernard Shaw once pointed out that a play (but what he says applies to any work of literature) does not age uniformly. Like a man, a book may be growing old in some ways while it remains young in others. There are, so to speak, a number of layers in any piece of literature and the process of dating may be imagined as beginning at the top and working gradually down. A book thirty years old may seem ridiculously out of date in the social fashions it portrays, while a book two hundred years old may disturb us gravely by some points of ethical outlook—though by that time its fashions and manners will have become so remote that they are probably an added attraction. We may take as a small, curious instance of ethical "dating" the prayer-scene in *Hamlet*. This incident has been a bother for the last hundred and fifty years or so,

because during that time it has been very hard for anyone to believe that Hamlet really meant what he said when he explained why he would not kill Claudius just then. Whatever Shakespeare's personal views may have been, I (for one) have no doubt whatever that he intended us to accept what Hamlet said as what Hamlet—just then—meant.

Beneath that layer in any work of literature in which we rub against ethical conceptions is a lower stratum still, with which we reach bedrock. It is the layer of what Arnold called the great primary human affections. Mr. Lewis has a mocking chapter entitled "The Doctrine of the Unchanging Human Heart": yet it is upon the basis of this very doctrine that literature rests and has its being. The *Odyssey* is now dated in almost every conceivable way—in every conceivable way (to be precise) but one: the primary human feelings that it portrays are our own. If ever the human heart does perceptibly change, then the *Odyssey*—with the rest of literature from its day to ours—will take a last slide into oblivion, for the sufficient reason that no reader will then exist who will have the slightest idea what it is about.

Now *Paradise Lost* dates. It embodies presuppositions (about Hierarchy, for instance) that are somewhat alien to the modern mind. It embodies presuppositions (about the physical constitution of angels, for example) that are not less than grotesque to the modern mind. All such presuppositions, no matter how remote from our customary views, must be well grasped before the poem can be appreciated and judged. But then, says Mr. Lewis, once we have grasped them the battle is over. Only understand what Milton *meant* in *Paradise Lost* and you will agree (he says) that there are no real problems at all.

I wonder if the case is quite so simple. Take Adam. Mr. Lewis quotes Raleigh's remark—"Adam from the depth of his inexperience is lavishly sententious"—and justly points out that Raleigh had no right to hinge his quip on the word "inexperience". That came from a misunderstanding of Milton. Adam is not at all to be imagined as inexperienced; that was by no means what Milton meant. Adam from the first was a man in knowledge as in stature. Augustine had

averred that "Adam's mental powers surpassed those of the most brilliant philosopher". We are expected to know all this, as also that Adam is wise and great and kingly, for all of this is what Milton meant.

Yes: and then we think of Raleigh's remark and again find ourselves tickled by it, for the Adam of that remark is the Adam of the poem. Mr. Lewis draws our attention, illuminatingly, to the effect of Adam in the *Divine Comedy*:

And Beatrice said, "Within yon light  
The first of souls whom ever the First Cause  
Did make, with love beholds the God who made him".  
Even as a leaf that in the passing wind  
Bows its frail head and, when the wind is passed,  
Of its own springy nature rises up,  
So did I bow my head (stupendous awe  
Was on me) while she spoke . . .

This (as Mr. Lewis says) is the right note, indeed. But how is it struck? By an indirection. And if Adam were to have made on us the impression that Milton meant him to make, and *no impression but that*, what really satisfactory method could there have been but the oblique? Milton's dilemma is that having chosen epic he must do more than hint Adam, he must set him properly going, make him talk; and the moment Adam begins to talk we become critical—we cannot help ourselves. As soon as he begins talking at length his impact on us is (and must of necessity be) that of a bore.

The problem of God, it goes without saying, was even more acute. Mr. Lewis again, by his own comment, shows the nature of the difficulty and the only way in which it could have been surmounted. "A God, theologically speaking, much worse than Milton's, would escape criticism if only he had been made sufficiently awful, mysterious, and vague"—and above all, we may add, if the greatest care had been taken that He should never open His lips.

Then there is Satan, on whom Mr. Lewis's views are very interesting. He admits, of course, that Satan is the most impressive of Milton's characters, and quickly forestalls any question why this should be so. A "bad" character, he says, is always easier to draw than a "good" one, for, as human nature itself inclines to be bad, "to make a character worse

than oneself it is only necessary to release imaginatively from control some of the bad passions which, in real life, are always straining at the leash". "The Satan, the Iago, the Becky Sharp" within each of us is always ready and waiting, only too eager to come out, if only into a book. To draw a "bad" character, in short, a writer has only to relax, be himself; to draw a "good" one he has to rise above himself. Hence the scarcity of well-drawn "good" characters, the abundance of well-drawn "bad". It is an ingenious theory which, if granted, would certainly explain in a second why Satan stands out amongst the other characters of *Paradise Lost*. But no evidence is offered in support of this theory; on the other hand, it is not difficult to think of numerous examples that appear to refute it. (Is not Cordelia at least as credible as Edmund? Is not Pompilia as real as Guido? Did Fielding succeed any better with Blifil than with Allworthy?) The truth is that Mr. Lewis's "good" contains a quibble. When we talk of drawing a "good" character we do not mean drawing a saint: the character of a saint is naturally difficult to draw, because of its wide divergence from common humanity. And does not that rather suggest what the real fact may be, that the farther a writer moves out from the central range of character towards *either* extreme, the harder becomes his task? Shakespeare perhaps failed with Isabella (the matter is arguable); it is possible that he was not entirely successful with Iago. Shakespeare's great successes, of course, were in the middle regions. But this does not mean that he failed to draw exceptional people—far from it. It does not usually occur to us to call Hamlet "good": the word seems irrelevant. Hamlet is a natural man, with a natural man's unevenness and imperfections; but he is a very wonderful natural man; he is in many respects the most wonderful specimen of a natural man that the human imagination has yet produced. And he is there, he exists. By comparison with him Iago is but a structure of lath and plaster.

We need none of Mr. Lewis's reasons to see why it is that Satan *must* stand out from the other persons in *Paradise Lost*; it is because he is the only person in the story whom in any real sense it was possible to draw at all. (It was

unfortunate that Milton, having committed himself to epic, should have found himself with only one "practicable" character at his disposal, but that is the plain fact of it.) "Set a hundred poets to tell the same story", says Mr. Lewis, "and in ninety of the resulting poems Satan will be the best character." Exactly; or not quite exactly, for Mr. Lewis's figures are inaccurate—in a hundred of the resulting poems Satan will be the best character. For, to repeat, the simple fact is that he has not, and in such circumstances could not have, any competition whatever.

There is no room to pursue such questions further, but surely it is plain that the theory of all these matters will not put everything right. Some of the difficulties that *Paradise Lost* now holds for us are due to the normal processes of "dating"; these we have to overcome by an imaginative effort. But there are profounder difficulties, inherent in the theme, and of these Mr. Lewis shows very little recognition. It is not as if they were difficulties that we might mention lightly and then dismiss, as if they did not after all essentially matter. They do essentially matter: they matter, that is to say, just so long as we persist in any attempt to take the poem on Milton's own terms. No doubt the time has come when we should give up such attempts. Can we (quite apart from the question of belief) find in *Paradise List* a deeply significant fable—a myth with a notable human truth at its centre? Possibly not. If we take that view, then the "essential" *Paradise Lost* will lie for us elsewhere. "What is great in *Paradise Lost*", says Grierson, "is the *art*." He is using the word in a somewhat specialised and rather superficial sense, but in the "art" of *Paradise Lost*, as Grierson means the word, we may well find our rest; nearly all of us, I would say, must now find it there. But that is not Mr. Lewis's approach by any means. On the contrary, his study is probably the most resolute attempt we have ever had to take the poem from beginning to end on Milton's terms. For him, therefore, these difficulties must be of importance.

What it seems to come to is this: the epic that Milton wrote is not the epic that he meant, and perhaps could not have been; for the epic that he meant was, strictly, unwritable.

Adam, as conceived by Milton, cannot be presented, for as soon as the process of presentation begins, distortion occurs; and this distortion is inevitable, it is of the nature of the case. Adam cannot speak twenty lines or move an inch without turning into something different from Milton's conception of him. Exactly the same thing applies to God, at least to God as conceived by Milton. It is just possible, as Grierson suggests, that a God conceived somewhat differently, more along the lines of the God of the Hebrew prophets—"transcendent and yet intensely human"—might have succeeded poetically where the God of Milton fails. As things are, the God of *Paradise Lost* cannot utter three words without antagonizing us. And with Satan we have the same problem, so to speak, in reverse: a tremendous imaginative conception, embodying a much greater measure of significant human truth than is to be found anywhere else in the poem, he is for that very reason as a character nearly unmanageable, and actually swings our feelings against the truths that Milton is wishing to make central. Milton is quite aware of what is threatening. There is scarcely a speech of Satan's that he is not at pains to correct, to damp down and neutralize. The procedure, technically, is almost comical. Milton puts some glorious thing in Satan's mouth, then, nervous about the effect of it, tugs us gently by the sleeve, saying (for this is what it comes to): "Be sure not to allow yourself to be carried away by this fellow: he *sounds* splendid, but take my word for it . . ." It may be urged that Milton is permitting Satan to make the best case he can. Perhaps; but unfortunately Satan succeeds: to our reason, more than once, his *is* the better case. All of which is merely to say that Milton's theme was one of the most awkward that a narrative poet ever undertook. And yet (on Milton's terms) *Paradise Lost* is a narrative poem or nothing—a story, and a reasonable story at that.

Milton criticism, first and last, has been much occupied with what *Paradise Lost* symbolises—what Adam and Eve stand for, what Satan typifies, what Christ represents (for although "allegory" is a forbidden word in discussion of *Paradise Lost* it is remarkable how near we seem to come to it on occasion). That the poem here and there has its deeper

symbolisms is not, perhaps, to be denied. All the same, such lines of approach draw our attention, indirectly, to the intractability of Milton's material. If characters are unsatisfactory as they are, it is obvious that the thing to do is to drop them as they are and to try, instead, to find out what they signify. Similarly, if surface meanings appear inadequate, obviously there is a strong temptation to look about for deeper and better ones—"unconscious" though they may be. So Paul Elmer More, disdaining the idea that man's disobedience and fall is Milton's real theme, finds the "innermost subject" to be "that aspiration after a Golden Age that has existed at all times among all peoples". (Mr. Lewis would suggest, I think, that there is no "innermost subject", and no subject at all except the one that Milton is aware of.) Dr. Tillyard, again, feeling, as everybody must, that the judgment on Adam and Eve is out of all proportion to the fault, seeks to show that the unhappy pair fell, not merely because of disobedience but also—and chiefly—because of what was behind it. And what was this? "Mental levity" and "gregariousness": these are the horrors for which our first parents were really punished, and on account of which the doom came on us all. "By their miserable inadequacy before the issues of life mankind have deserved their fate." Mr. Lewis, for his part, is not attracted by such explanations. He has made a valiant—indeed a heroic—effort to set the poem once again on its own feet. One's only quarrel with him, really, is that he thinks he has set it squarely on its feet; but that is something which simply cannot be done.

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## EXIT WITH EFFECT

(This fragment occurs at the close of a dramatic poem. The 'hero', an enigmatic and complex public figure, has just been fatally injured in a street riot. Being simultaneously wealthy and an active sympathiser with the working class movement, he has acquired a highly contradictory reputation. The Press, the Radio and Polite Conversation have joined forces in labelling him "eccentric".)

## i

## CROWD:

Life lapses quickly from the hero  
 After the jagged and flimmering climax.  
 The concluding passages are unpretentious.  
 He lies in a void of linament and linen  
 Amid the surgical distresses, waiting to be wheeled into the final  
     theatre,  
 Where death will mop up the horrible disarray,  
 Where the weathercock will veer  
 And a gay new wind will skim, will, slim as a scandal,  
 Steer from the east.

But do not imagine the gloom is unrelieved:  
 That hero dies improperly who dies  
 Not uttering the Word which knits or weaves  
 His unconvincing years, his least gestures, his philosophy  
 His behaviour upon a certain occasion before a certain person,  
 His smart handling of the contretemps in the garden,  
 Weaves all into a coat of fantastic colours,  
 Which the young may ape, or the publicist fly from a significant  
     building.

This hero, now, within, who is preparing for a drastic departure,  
 Burning the dreamy correspondence, the maps and the incriminating  
     evidence of life,  
 Tearing up the desolating memory, interring diplomacy, mascot and  
     insignium,  
 He has frequently responded marginally, not focally, to the given  
     situation.  
 His acts have often left us gasping, left us gazing  
 In surprise at some irrelevant object—a table top,  
 A plaster cast, or a photograph of someone  
 To whom we had never been introduced.

But do not doubt that as the colour changes in his cheeks,  
 As the flesh yields up its tortuously acquired knowledge,  
 The lips their wit, the eyes their analogies,  
 The thighs their kindness, the hair its extraordinary wrath and love, we  
 Do not doubt that the Word will finally be uttered,

And our patience at his not unoccasional rashness be rewarded,  
 And our careful misunderstanding be given its due. We  
 Do not doubt that we will linger over the Word,  
 That all will be endlessly explained and understood,  
 The mists and mystery removed,  
 Acts, facts and events seen in suitable perspectives,  
 And the dictatorship of boredom and commonsense be re-established.  
 Let us hurry to the hospital.

Life lapses quickly.

A microphone or a dictaphone  
 A telephone or a movie tone  
 Will be set at the bedside to catch the drone  
 Of the dying voice, but the magic Word  
 That is sure to save us is sure to be heard.  
 The Mother will scuttle it in her muff,  
 The Nurse will scribble it on her cuff,  
 The Friend will enshrine it deep in his brain,  
 The Stenographer, ruffling the counterpane,  
 Will scratch an illegible something in a sixpenny book,  
 So it's certain to be noticed by the unsuccessful crook,  
 The priest and the landlord, the murderers and rapers.  
 Though it won't receive prominence in local papers,  
 We'll see that it's recorded, and mused upon, and heard  
 By everybody interested in culture and the Word.  
 So hurry, hurry, all of you, guttersnipe and pierrot,  
 For life lapses swiftly from the mutilated hero.

#### HONEYVOICE:

O do not think of the hero as dying, think of him merely  
 As one who goes into another room for a clean handkerchief.  
 By tapping on the walls or by raising your voices,  
 You may communicate, you may resume  
 The old conversation exactly  
 Where it was dropped.  
 I do not think the situation will offer  
 Cause for regrets. The hero had  
 A ravishing mind, but his face was unbeautiful.  
 Now we may have the mind without the face.  
 We may communicate  
 And yet discriminate.  
 You may remember that the hero has often been—well,  
 One doesn't like  
 To speak of a good man and a dying with disrespect—  
 But even the professional distorter of data  
 Couldn't obscure the fact that the hero was—  
 Like most heroes I've no doubt—  
 By no means disinclined for indiscretions.

But now when the hero speaks from heaven  
 Or taps the wall or by even more effectual methods  
 Indicates his considered opinions,  
 It will scarcely be necessary to reveal everything.  
 Without a sense of guilt we may conceal  
 The hero's O too widely advertised follies.  
 Think now of the sway that those words which we chose to display  
 Will convey! Coming otherwise—such a distance—  
 From Paradise, a Centre, I'm informed, where wisdom and culture are  
     seriously studied even  
 In practical and successful circles, where Music and Aviation  
 Are handsomely subsidised by the makers of wings, hymns and harps.  
 So do not think of the hero as dying  
 But as one who has gone to a Turkish bath  
 Or upon an extended visit to cousins.  
 Death is unreal, my friends, Death is a pretty door  
 Around which delicious roses cluster. Death is no more.

#### HERO (dying):

So this is how it happens. This is how  
 The ship is abandoned and we take to the rocktoed points.  
 But no shouting to smash the air, no spectacle,  
 No searchlights from the peninsula, no waves to roar,  
 No intrepid carsmen pushing out from the shore.

Only the simmer and stir in the streets,  
 And the past becoming more and more unremarkable,  
 Only the philanthropy, the beautiful act that brought  
 A tear to your eye (it was so good and nice)  
 Silting beneath its patina of premeditated ice.

The woman who thought me a mystical freak  
 Who could with a word's spark kindle her fungoid heart,  
 The man who smiled, considering me a variety of sideshow,  
 But would have listened further had the time been available,  
 And, far beneath all these, the underscum who believed,

All but the last will desire a dying Word from me,  
 A word to convict, or debunk or rearrange the scenery.  
 But I was not one to hang from a cross. I fought where I could,  
 Taught where I could, said the inappropriate verse,  
 Etched afresh the smirk on the clamorous slopes, favoured the relative  
     honesty.

The scum that have fought by my side, they will know, and will know  
 To expect nothing more than a gasp, a closed eye or a silence.  
 They will find eloquent the empty room, the unequivocal funeral.  
 But for the others, those in the west, those in the fabulous streets,  
 The amused, the vaguely involved, I will say this—

Move out as quick as you can from the house on the fallow field.  
The plough has come over the hill. Depart for the beach,  
The river, the mountain, or a climate that favours your health.  
The plough will follow, but you who have always believed  
In the preciousness of the present moment, reserve a seat in the train,  
Hurry off in a scarlet roadster. Be satisfied.  
To you, the remaining six or seven who manipulate the weather in  
this particular heaven,  
Who own and distribute, marshal and misdirect the fray,  
To you I say—These are a great people.  
Theirs is a great suffering. . . . Beware.

## VOICES:

Beware, beware of the gathering dark  
Around those four pools of light—your home  
Your office, the eighteenth tee, your soul.  
Beware of the incident and the episode.  
They will grow more frequent, like beads on a rosary,  
Each in itself a prayer—  
Beware, beware, beware.

## DOCTOR:

As doctor in charge of this unfortunate man, I prescribe, I *order*  
Silence. Nurse, this mustn't be repeated. Nothing has been said.

## NURSE:

He is dead, Doctor.

## DOCTOR:

Announce the fact to the crowd. Remove the remains. This is a  
Christian hospital.

## CROWD:

What does he say? What does the strange man say?

## NURSE:

Nothing whatever. The patient has passed away.

## CROWD:

Gone? Nothing said? What was the final word  
Uttered upon the bed?

## DOCTOR:

Nothing whatever. Nothing whatever was heard.  
Nothing at all was said.

## CROWD:

Nothing at all? Not even a prayer was said?  
Then nothing will ever be said. The man is dead.

## PRESSMAN:

Slip us the dope, Dok. I'm one of the town's slickest newshounds.  
My paper has a backing of several hundred thousand pounds.

## DOCTOR (striving to be patient):

It happened like this. The patient was calm.  
No one at all felt the slightest alarm.  
I knew by his colour and weak lower lip  
That a very bad conscience was giving him gyp.  
I thought it a kindness in such an extreme  
To let him slip into a penitent dream.  
I never inject any needles by force  
When a patient's unsettled by fear and remorse.  
So we promptly abandoned the sufferer's room  
And left him alone to his well-deserved gloom.  
On returning a very few minutes ago  
We found he'd departed this kingdom of woe.  
He was, as you know, friends, a thoroughly bad  
Agitator. Despite it all, death appears sad  
Even to doctors quite hardened to 'sights',  
To horror at morning, to screams in the nights.  
But heaven is merciful. Even his soul  
Will be placed, I am sure, on an adequate dole.  
So hurry, disperse—or we'll call the police—  
Be off! For you menace the hospital's peace.

## CROWD:

But, Doctor, O Doctor, what did he say  
As he raised his anchor and vanished away?

## DOCTOR:

As I've told you, we heard not a word that he said  
If he spoke at all. So depart to bed!  
Wait! I'll tell you this. There's a sweet, sweet smile  
Just appeared on his ugly distorted old dial.

MUIR HOLBURN.

## "WRONG SIDE OF THE BLANKET"

A HOUSE, more than a hundred years old, stuck down like a dog-kennel, three doors below the butcher, and only just round the corner from the village itself.

Breathless inside. Windows shut; darkened by curtains. Lumps of furniture blocking up the sitting-room. Some engravings, a piano, a clock, numerous books. Several foot-stools—children of the chairs; and related to the sofa. Bell-pulls on each side of the fireplace; a fireplace which imitated the Black Hole of Calcutta; without, however, any sign of Indian warmth. Brutal aboriginal irons in the fender.

The silence of a cemetery.

Sometimes, a rat, like pictures of Fagan, showing himself gravely; gravely returning to his home in the wall. Smell of dead carpets mixed with stale flower-water. The walking-stick-noise of a tap, two doors away . . . Tock! Tock! Tock! . . . The tap, gloomily dripping over a bath, among broken bits of soap, wash-rags, nail-brushes; and, certainly, a split looking-glass.

Seen through the window, branches of a tree, no longer a tree; now terminus to a clothesline . . . clothesless. Desolate pegs.

In the kitchen, an old woman, hardly alive, just able to shell peas. Over her head, a tradesman's calendar. Tins for sugar, flour, tea.

Flies everywhere: in cups, in glasses and on the wall.

In this house I was born. Here, I spent hours of childhood, with my father and mother and grandfather, and sister Sue. Severe company. The elders, stiff like Balaclava cannon, ready to go off at a minute's notice. Sue, eight years old, just as fierce, with lightning in her eyes; and, under the table, sharp shoes to hurt my shins if I hadn't left upon my plate enough contributions towards Mr. Taylor's supper: Mr. Taylor being her crow, in lieu of a canary; since canaries must have upset the colour-thought of our household regime.

Once, after my mother had chased the crow from the back doorstep, Sue made an attempt at *felo-de-se*, hitting herself

on her forehead with a hammer; but the hammer-head fell off its handle and only raised a lump above her eyes.

Later on, chasing a lizard under the wood-cellar door, I opened a way for Mr. Taylor to make a kill; but found, instead of a lizard, Sue asleep . . . her cheeks still trickling tears; her mouth still dark with pain.

At once, I entered the cellar; and Mr. Taylor, disgusted, was already half-way towards the kitchen-midden when I shut myself in.

Sue woke, slapped my face, then went to sleep again. Thus—companioned, yet companionless—I, also, temporarily left the world. Dreamt of a top promised for Christmas; imagining it already mine. Watched it spin round and round.

At waking-time, magnified against a flood of light, we saw a beetle—or, was it grandfather using his stick for a feeler because he was unable to stoop and see in?

Soon he shut the door; turning the key in its padlock, which didn't matter because the padlock hung from a precarious nail. But the old man still loitered outside. We guessed he was filling his pipe, and knew we had been right when matches rattled followed by a villainous smell. A neighbour spoke across the fence; and, because the neighbour was voluble, grandfather never answered a word. Sue and I knew this man's talk by heart.

The invention of a ventriloquial musket. "We fire it off *here*, Sir! . . . The report is heard *over there*!"

Bang! Bang!

A demonstration which defeated its own ends.

Silence followed, broken by the sound of grandfather shuffling away.

By and by, mother came, and walked up and down. Walked up and down. Walked—waited—continued to walk up. Then never walked down.

Other people arrived, headed by a boy with a whip and pockets full of stones. The boy threw the stones over a wide circuit, hesitating and listening, as a lion does, for the noise of his prey. At intervals, he snapped his whip. Put off by grandfather, nobody tried the cellar; so that, even locked up, we remained paradoxically free.

At about six o'clock, we returned to the house and high-tea; without being scolded. Sat through the whole tedious meal; but had nothing given us to eat. Afterwards, instead of being sent to our rooms, we were compelled to stay up an extra hour, with botany to do.

Mother, an inopportune botanist, liked to point the way through flowers—never real flowers, but drawings of flowers—towards “higher things”.

<i>Common</i>	<i>Botanical</i>	<i>Native</i>
<i>Name</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Country</i>
Fig	Ficus Carica	Levant
And so, at last, to bed.		

Over our dining-room fireplace hung a smoke-begrimed portrait of “Guido, Prince of——?” (I never yet knew what place he was prince of).

In the painting, he wore a Geneva-cut wig with a duck’s tail, retroussé, behind; which exactly set off his eighteenth century clothes, gallanted by dozens of buttons unbuttoned across a frenzy of lace. Also, I noticed the pockets of his black plush waistcoat, drawn out like dogs’ tongues, hanging down, both sides. A fashion among “bloods” of that period.

A truculent man; his loosely scribbled mouth seemed to register distaste for the room he occupied, while his nose, which appeared to have unrolled nearly to touch his chin, was now ready to roll up again. Slits for eyes over cheeks of granulated red.

The image of intolerance. Whenever any of us hiccupped, I expected him to wrench himself free of his frame.

One day, in a manuscript book left by accident on a window-seat, I saw something explanatory of the picture. The prince’s identity. His relationship to our family: for relationship there was.

A journey for my great grandmother to Van Diemen’s Land. A pension regularly paid. Secrets told in vain to Sue—too young to comprehend.

On auspicious occasions, mother, father and grandfather would stand, complimenting each other, under the portrait, or “Prince’s Head” as it was called. But I failed to gather

supplementary information, or to put two and two together in the way to make four. Only, I knew that these unlovable kinsfolk had a senseless sense of their own importance; and that instead of being useful, they preferred to act as stately (?) driftwood cumbering the human stream.

My mother, the supposed descendant, was glacial; and, even in her least frigid moments, suggested an iceberg freezing the air between us and the sun.

Sharp with her tongue, I once heard my father protest against its use, telling her she made him feel "low, indeed", and "Madam, if only I could put the Indian Ocean between you and me——"

On shopping days, she washed the money brought back in change for a sovereign and laid it along the window-ledge to dry; open to, though secure from, my unacquisitive hands. Mr. Taylor, strange to relate, with less spending opportunities, became suspect, and passed this particular hour in what was once a meat-safe; now, an impromptu cage.

He loved the glitter . . . would open his beak . . . but had nothing to say.

Seated parallel with the coins being dried, my mother read her bible, ate biscuits, and drank up most part of a bottle of wine.

Sometimes, the wine conquered the bible; conquered her reserve. It was then she called me "Jamaica Raw", my father's people having come from the West Indies; pointed to my curious feet and exclaimed "Rocking-horse heels! Old Pa Calker's nigger-woman wet-nurse!'" And "Sue is the same!!!"

She visited people poor in their own generation, but with backgrounds of pomp and pretence. People who, when they heard mother's cab crunching their landlord's gravel, clapped hands, believing their return to the *haut monde* assured.

Encouraged, and fawned upon, by *crétins* like these, she patronised them and reaped some rewards of pride—titillations within.

Among such surroundings, she became the grand lady to extreme; so that natural reaction made her feel bruised

when she sank back into the family nest, three doors below the butcher, and a bit pinched for room . . . remembering as inmates my father and grandfather; myself and my termagant sister called Sue.

This meant for her the bottle, soundly swigged, under the sign of "The Prince's Head". Glass after glass went down; several being heralded by explosions from next-door's musket; until night descended, when my father put a lighted match to three separate gas-jets, tossed a white cloth on top of the table; placed bread, cheese, butter, jam, pickles, and cold meat to hand. Made a pot of tea, and began to pour.

Mother stood up, tall, like an obelisk; her house-cap level with the Prince's eye. She could just speak; but what she intended was nastily said.

A single sentence that set my father's mutton-chop whiskers whirring. She continued:

"West Indian . . . slave-driving . . . créoles! . . . The whole pack of you!" "Myself, the de—scend—ant of a Prince!"

"A Prince", repeated my father.

"A lady—in—my—own—right!"

"Descendant of a pig! A pig!! The Prince's house-keeper! . . . As common as hell!"

He got up from the table, screwed himself clear of his chair, and walked out of the room.

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## EXTRACT FROM UNNAMED VERSE PLAY

I am the onlooker.  
I gaze over the blue waters  
And watch the season's change.  
Spectator, I observe, record each happening  
But play no part beyond interpreting  
The signs of action.  
In the long pauses when the world  
Of men waits for disaster  
I watch the inevitable action  
Of the seasons passing without pause  
Or hint of crisis  
Beyond the normal crises  
Of summer, spring, autumn and winter.  
Over the blue water I watch the seasons march  
Waiting for men to interrupt with action.  
I am responsible for the record  
Of men's actions,  
But make no record of the changes  
On the blue water as the seasons march  
But watch always the blue water  
Surrender to the seasons on their march.  
Men's actions interrupt my watching  
Of the waters.  
I turn from thoughts of trees  
To observe wars,  
From contemplation of the spring  
To note seaborne famine.  
From the beauty of summer  
To count the violent dead.  
From the solemnity of autumn  
To assess the homeless,  
And from the sadness of winter  
To count widow's tears.  
This is my task, to turn away my eyes  
From watching through thin leaves  
The blue waters surrender  
To the march of the months.  
And tell what I see of men and men's ways  
From my vantage point  
Through thin trees above the blue water  
And blot out the sun to tell the true thing seen  
On the blue water.

ELISABETH LAMBERT.

## THE OCEAN

The high sinister waves  
 poured, and broad to the cleft,  
 wheeled like curlews the spectral  
 sands, retire, grieved,  
 impassioned, yearn for the ecstasy  
 and agony of their tumult;  
 in the lamentation of their hearts  
 beating back  
 into the wider swell of time.

MAX HARRIS.

## SONG FROM A PLATTER

"Thereupon they held a feast. The head was on the table placed."  
*The Ballad of Hælewijn.*

What wentst thou forth, o vigilant, to see?  
 A reed a-shake upon the uncouth wind?  
 The wagtail flirting with the aspen tree?  
 A footprint smudged beneath the desert sand?

What wentst thou forth, Princess, to make thine own?  
 A courser swifter than the desert gale?  
 The elf-knight shaping his compulsive horn?  
 A spouse to strip thee to thy seventh veil?

What wentst thou forth, Herodias, to win?  
 A life beyond old Jordan's weary wave?  
 Or in my blood to steep thy wolfish sin,  
 And of my muted lips thy will to have?

PETER HOPEGOOD.

## APOLOGY

Think me not unkind  
 That I hastened away.  
 The tree loves the wind  
 That must leave her today,  
 For he will return  
 And long days will come after  
 With deeps of quiet love  
 And shallows of soft laughter.

ROBERT CLARK.

## WRITER AND READER

*Australian Poetry, 1942.* Selected by R. D. Fitzgerald. (Angus and Robertson.)

*Moles Do so Little with their Privacy*, by "E". (Angus and Robertson.)

*Mood Music*, by Graham Murray Harding. (Ure Smith, Pty. Ltd.)

*Dawnfire.* Selections from some modern Australian Poets. (John Cremin.)

ALTHOUGH, as the publishers assert, "the principle of selection has remained unaltered, an insistence upon poetic quality", the dominant subject of *Australian Poetry, 1942*, is the war as experienced by both soldier and civilian. If the publishers' assertion about the principles of selection is true, and there has been no attempt to make the volume show the form and pressure of its time, this is both interesting and significant. Some of the poems have come from previously unknown men, who have turned their experiences of the front line into poetry. In *Breaking*, written from experience of war in Greece, we have a moving impression of ruin and death all round after the storm has passed:

Hunted and breaking, alone with the dead—  
Where shall I hide my face and my head?

In *The Wounded* Shawn O'Leary describes the tense fear and physical suffering of nerves strung to breaking point. The poem is remarkable for its honesty. There is no making light of suffering, but equally no submission to it. Now and then there is a shrug of the shoulders, as in *Good Friday*:

He must have wondered why he should have died.

But there is no bitterness. Perhaps the most impressive of the war-poems is John Quinn's *Troopship at Night*. In an atmosphere of loneliness, darkness, and menace, the mind dwells upon what is past and upon the unknown future, "destination unknown", interrupted by trivial things on the deck of the ship, men stirring in sleep, stumbling in the dark, the thought of men gambling in the "blue, ghost-lighted hold". In *Emu Parade* T. Inglis Moore returns to his favourite theme of mateship among "men removed from greed". The emu-parade is the task of picking up litter and refuse about the grounds of the camp. Wryly the poet wonders whether it was for this that men gave up unachieved careers, and, with the picture of the men bobbing in the emu-parade before his mind, he analyses the motives that they had in going to war.

The history of the poems by "E" told by Miles Franklin in an explanatory note is of interest, and readers will find a pleasure in reading the poems with the quoted opinions of well-known critics in mind. The poems are not distinguished by rhythm or workmanship; "E" concentrates most upon the thought. She has a sententious bent, and loves to interpret recollected experience. She is fascinated by origins, "evolvments", the struggle of existence. There is a neat

touch of satire in many of the poems. "E" has a love of the terse, the epigrammatic, of meaning flashed out suddenly in a closing line. She makes some cunning use of literary reminiscence:

And in God's house are many scansions  
Silent upon the freak with Harrington.

The short iambic lines, unpretentious diction and simple stanza form, suit very well the fanciful speculations, and neatly framed observations of "E", as in *A Dream* and *Onslaught*. *The Wall* and *Risings Up* are hardly successful because the subjects are rather beyond the scope of "E's" method. Her skill in epigrammatic statement is well seen in *Travellers* and *Contentment*. Here and there one finds a telling image as in the closing lines of *Lion*. But on the whole the poems are not rich in imagery. "E" does not think in images, and her characteristic method, as shown in her most successful pieces, does not demand that she should. One has the impression of a gentle, reflective mind, stirred now and then to protest and impatience. There will be many opinions about the place of this woman poet, who consented to publication only on condition of anonymity. The book contains a very good critical preface by T. Inglis Moore.

*Mood Music* is a fitting title for the poems by Graham Murray Harding. Mr. Harding is attracted by what is delicate, smooth, "silvery", by moods almost too fleeting to be captured. One has only to look through his first poem to feel what it is that fascinates him in form, texture, colour, and movement. *Wafts, silvery laces, arustle, smooth, shining, mirror, rose land, fine, steel*. These are keywords. A characteristic piece, and one of his most successful, is that entitled *Sunset*:

Arms tensed, throbbing for awaited moment  
Pauses, donates her voice  
Supple-coloured  
To the faintest limits of the auditorium,  
Step by step  
Retreats, a few tears and  
With decision quits the stage.  
Now to each nod the audience  
Of pale leaves, dips each into his heart  
For childish applause, whispers of approval.  
Comments spoken, faded cloaks adjusted,  
Shyly they retreat, out of step, arm in arm  
Into the descending shadows.

In a Foreword to *Dawnfire* the editors discuss the difficulties of publication in a land where "many sing but few listen" and explain that "by the simple device of asking a number of poets to pool their resources, and by doing the actual work of publication in our spare time and for the love of it, we have, we think, produced a volume of poetry which is not unworthy of the poetic tradition of this country". Seven poets were chosen for inclusion. The editors do not claim that they are the best of Australia's living poets. But they do claim that they have attempted "to present a fair cross-section of today's

poetry". The poets chosen are Myall O'Mallee, Goola Hartstein, Kathleen Watson, Garry Lyle, Mona Brand, Flexmore Hudson and Harry Hooton.

A. G. MITCHELL.

*Coast to Coast.* Australian Stories, 1942. Selected by Beatrice Davis. (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1943. 7s. 6d.)

*In the Sun*, by Margaret Trist. Sydney, 1943.

THE most interesting fact about *Coast to Coast* is that the best stories have been written by writers with whom the average reader will not be familiar, while some of the worst have been contributed by those who have already established their names. "Trochus Island", with its trite anti-climax, adds nothing to Vance Palmer's reputation; Frank Dalby Davison takes an unconscionably long time to sketch the character of Con in "Transition"; and Henrietta Drake-Brockman's story "Kaditcha" shows once again her inability in the short story to make her characters more than puppets. On the other hand, Frank Sargeson's "Two Worlds" is a particularly neat tale of religious differences in Dublin; J. C. Shelley's "Once Break the Ice" gives a most interesting study of a crisis in a boy's life; and Marjorie Robertson's "Devotions" is an impressive sketch of a "heathen" in a Catholic Church. This being so, some readers will conclude only that some of our leading writers have been grossly overrated; those more favourably inclined will think the success of the new writers more than just a comparative one. In either case one must recognize that the Australian short story is again on the upward path.

It is particularly hard to summarize impressions of a book so varied, but perhaps a few general points may be made. First, some of the stories, good as they are, would have been better still if the meaning had been implied rather than directly stated. ("Night on the River" is an interesting example.) Secondly, the influence of one or two important overseas writers has not been properly assimilated. (Hemingway and H. E. Bates are two who spring to mind.) Thirdly, Australians are still perhaps more often successful when writing stories with a humorous twist (like "Our New Properties") than when dealing with a purely tragic situation (as in "The Book").

Miss Margaret Trist is represented in *Coast to Coast* by "Halcrow Street". It is a good choice in that it shows Miss Trist at her best, although it is not typical, since she seldom writes of the city. Miss Trist tries to combine in her stories two of the qualities that are considered essentially modern—realism and psychological observation. Her realism, however, descends sometimes to mere enumeration of unimportant detail; and she has not yet learnt *how* to give the reader necessary information. Since in one way this criticism also applies to some of the stories in *Coast to Coast*, one may quote from the bottom of the second page of "The Hobbses", a passage that shows how this should not be done:

The entire family, apart from Mr. Hobbs, were at the table when Mary slipped in and sat down. The boys were too busy bolting their breakfast to take any notice of her. They both had to catch the train, Kerry to go to work in the city, Morley to get to the high school in the next town. Mary, who was next to Kerry in age, was the sole assistant in Mrs. Jennings' drapery store. The two younger children attended the local school.

Again, Miss Trist's psychological studies fail because she constantly intrudes between her characters and her readers. Sometimes the intrusion takes the form of mere moralising ("Like most women she had endured much. Like most men who live long enough, Joe had burdened her with the proverbial last straw"! ) More often it occurs when she attributes to a character a thought proper to herself. (Would Dan of "Show Day" reflect that "*modern inertia* had spread even to the chooks"? ) One result of these habits is that certain types of character appear again and again in the book.

One cannot help wondering whether some of Miss Trist's faults may not be due to wrong choice of models, seeing that it is for the literary use she makes of her material that she is to be criticized. The material itself is good; Miss Trist has lived with the characters she writes about and has a keen eye for detail.

H. J. OLIVER.

*Stolne and Surreptitious Copies. A Comparative Study of Shakespeare's Bad Quartos.* By Alfred Hart. (Melbourne University Press, 1942. 12s. 6d.)

It would be well to begin a review of Mr. Hart's study of Shakespeare's bad quartos by stating that this is one of the most important works of English scholarship to come from Australia. Mr. Hart has proved beyond possibility of further doubt that the plays known to us as "The Contention between the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster" and "The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke", as well as the first quartos of "Romeo and Juliet", "Henry V", "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and "Hamlet", are not the sources of the authentic Shakespeare dramas, but are later, debased, versions of what Shakespeare wrote. Mr. Hart proves this by applying his own special vocabulary tests, showing that in each of the garbled quartos (unlike the genuine source plays) there are very few words that are not found in the corresponding Shakespeare play; by giving the details of the garbling and explaining how the corruption was brought about; by analysing the verse structure and stage directions of the bad quartos; and, what is perhaps most important, by giving literally scores of lines in the bad quartos that can be explained only by reference to the authentic texts and on the assumption of the priority of these authentic texts. He is also particularly successful in bringing out the full absurdity of the earlier view that the bad quartos were source plays, showing what an incredible portrait of Shakespeare these views involve.

Mr. Hart himself argues that "each bad quarto is a garbled abridgement of an acting version made officially by the play adapter of the company from Shakespeare's manuscript", that is, that each of the quartos he treats is an unofficial abridgement of the official abridgement for acting. He thinks that such an official abridgement was made of every Elizabethan play, reducing each to a standard length of about 2,300 lines, so that it could be acted within the two hours' limit that he himself takes literally. I can accept the first and more important half of this thesis; I am very doubtful about the second, for if Mr. Hart is right, surely he must explain why a dramatist as practical as Shakespeare continued to write plays that were inevitably cut down by acting companies to two-thirds or less of their length. To this extent, and only to this extent, Mr. Hart's position is little better than the one he attacks, since it assumes that Shakespeare must have continued to write lines "in order that his friends might have something to strike out". (We may not assume, of course, that Shakespeare had his eye on the publication of his works.) Of this difficulty, unless I have misread, Mr. Hart offers no explanation.

I think, too, that Mr. Hart sometimes overrates the originality of his methods. I do not refer to the vocabulary test that he has made his own; his other methods, however, have all, I think, been used by English and American critics, though no one has considered the bad quartos together as Mr. Hart does and certainly no one has collected such an overwhelming number of facts. When Mr. Hart provides tables of facts, there is no arguing with him; but many will differ with some of his literary judgments. Two that I cannot accept are that "regularity and monotony of rhythm and stress hallmark the blank verse of Greene" and the old heresy that Marlowe wrote "no comic scenes". (Has Mr. Hart forgotten *Mycetes*?) I do not follow him when he notices metrical irregularities in "Edward II" and concludes that "perhaps the text of this play is not above suspicion"; and cannot Drayton's use of Sidney's "I am not pick-purse of another's wit" be a legitimate literary allusion rather than an example of stealing?

It would be invidious to press such minor criticisms too far. "Stolne and Surreptitious Copies", particularly in its destructive criticism of previously held views, is a work of major critical importance.

H. J. OLIVER.

## CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor,  
*Southerly*.

Dear Sir,

Miss Broad's article on Mayakovsky in the April number of *Southerly* gave a rather misleading view of the poet and his work. It raises the suspicion that Miss Broad has not a first-hand acquaintance with the poems she sums up so glibly and that she has not read Mayakovsky's own views on poetry. No one who has read *A Cloud in Trousers* even in translation would describe it simply as a poem of unrequited love. It is primarily a manifesto. Mayakovsky himself said of it, in the preface to the second edition in 1918: "*A Cloud in Trousers* I consider a catechism of present-day art. 'Away with your love!' 'Away with your art!' 'Away with your organisation!' 'Away with your religion!'—are the four cries of its four parts." It is, in fact, much more important a document in showing what Futurism meant for Mayakovsky than the *Slap in the Face to Public Taste*, in which the influence of Chlebnikov and Burlyuk predominates. One might ask, by the way, why Miss Broad omits to mention Burlyuk. Again, Miss Broad includes the verse play *Mystery Bouffe* among Mayakovsky's revolutionary poems instead of putting it among his plays as do the editors of the collected edition of his works.

But it is in the general impression of Mayakovsky that Miss Broad is most likely to mislead her readers. Anyone who did not know Mayakovsky's work might get the idea that he was a complete iconoclast in his attitude towards the classics of Russian literature. This would be far from the truth. He loved and defended Pushkin. He knew *Eugene Onegin* by heart. His attitude to the classical writers of the past is best expressed in his own words: "There is no call to decry the poetry of the past—that is material by which we learn. Our chief and lasting hatred is hurled at the romantic critical habitation."

It was the sham poets which this criticism manufactured out of the genuine writers and the way in which they were used to bolster conventional morality that Mayakovsky attacked and it was this attitude which distinguished him among most of the elder and many of the younger literary critics of revolutionary Russia.

Again, the general impression of Mayakovsky as a poet in Miss Broad's article is that of a rude genius conducting a kind of literary rough-house. The emphasis is all on the energy and neglects the patience and skill, it is all on the surprising, the novel, the noise and the crudity. It neglects to point out that Mayakovsky was a serious student of poetry and a meticulous artist. He did not simply grab the language of the streets and the rhythms of popular speech and hurl them into poems. He speaks of the long and patient labour by which this language, this material has to be sifted, sorted, welded and made

into the material of poetry, of the immense continual labour of collecting and cramming the skull with a hoard of impressions, words, expressions, incidents and details; of the patient building up of the intricate habits on which the rhythmic structure of poetry depends. He was neither the slapdash, spontaneous creator nor the rhetorical formalist that Miss Broad's article suggests. One wonders, indeed, at the assumption of authority with which she pats Mayakovsky on the back for his rhythmic innovations "producing novel and not always disagreeable effects". Of all the features of poetry that are difficult for a foreigner to assess and to criticise, that of rhythm needs perhaps the most caution. Even if Miss Broad has read Mayakovsky's *How to Make Poems*, even if she has a deep and thorough knowledge of the Russian language and a true feeling for its rhythms and the secret springs of its movement in prose and poetry, she should be cautious. She should remember Dante's sound advice to German critics of Italian poetry.

Perhaps the chief fault of the article was its failure to point out the logical basis of Mayakovsky's theory that his poetry must take the revolution as its subject. In *How to Make Poems* he explains that poetry must always break new ground. The man who first discovered that  $2 + 2 = 4$  was a mathematician—a great mathematician. But the man who uses this fact in a calculation today is not a mathematician, he is a technician. Technicians are valuable people too, but those who merely use rules are not mathematicians. Mathematicians are people who make discoveries, advance the study of mathematics. The poet is in the same position. If he merely repeats or uses the poetic tradition he is a mere literary technician. A poet is a person who creates new resources for poetry, assimilates new material, and above all gives new understanding. Like the mathematician, he advances the frontiers of knowledge.

The poet  
                    essentially  
blows forth  
                    in advance  
                    from the dim spark  
Undimmed knowledge.

(A Consideration of Ivan Molchanov and Poetry, 1927.)

It is thus clear why the poet in a country in revolution and social construction is bound to deal with that material and to deal with it not in traditional literary terms but in its own terms. Mayakovsky did not simply devote his poetry to the revolution as a sort of sacrifice to his political convictions. As he said: "To participate or not to participate: for me there was no such question. It was my revolution." To be a poet at all was to be a maker of new worlds, in a state of revolution and in a society in revolution he held that to be a poet admitted no other course since poetry is in every sense a social activity.

Looked at from this point of view he becomes a comprehensible figure and we have a chance of seeing in him, behind the propagandist of revolution, the attitudes and methods in which all original poets show an essential similarity. Those who study Mayakovsky through the medium of tendentious biographies and current critical articles will find him quite incredible. Those who study what he said and what he said about himself will be reassured. He is no monster, no *lusus naturae*, but an artist working by familiar means with unfamiliar material.

The article has other faults for which Miss Broad is perhaps less to blame since she follows a well established tradition. There is for instance the lack of balance in presenting Mayakovsky as a poet fanatic and omitting his sense of fun. As the clouds of political dispute evaporate in the course of time it will be seen that Mayakovsky was a great comic writer. This humour, like that of the other great writer produced by the Revolution, Michael Zoshchenko, is so much in the very texture of the language that it does not translate well. Then there is that element of magnanimity and generosity which develops through his work, that particularly Russian quality of *dobrodushive* which, as he hinted to his young critic Talnikov, "grows with the growth of the beard".

Again, there is apt to be a misplaced emphasis on the novelty of Mayakovsky's achievement. In spite of the shock he gave to Russian poetry he invented no device of rhythm, no method of language that was not already known in Western Europe. He is a great assimilator, a great creator rather than a great inventor. His real place is oddly enough among the great religious poets, those who give abstract interpretation to the life of their generation and at the same time translate an abstract moral system into a living emotion. In more than one respect his closest neighbour in poetry is Dante.

A. D. HOPE.

## AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE, 1942

By H. M. GREEN

*This is the fourth of our annual summaries, though they cover a period of five years. It is hoped to bring out the 1943 summary much earlier, but some delay is inevitable, because books published towards the end of a year may not be obtainable for months afterwards.*

IN actual production 1942 was another average year, but its record is better if its handicaps are taken into account. Hardly any Australian books are published in England just now, and lack of paper and manpower are affecting Australian production. Also, hardly any of our established writers published a book in 1942. But in the drama there was something like a record. Though a great many Australian plays are being written and staged or put over the air, it is seldom that one is published; this year there were four. The output of verse was far below the average, but there was an excellent book of short stories and several good novels, one outstanding. In all directions prospects are satisfactory; there are now four annual anthologies, three of verse and one of prose; and three literary magazines, which afford opportunities to the poet quite as much as to the prose writer; and the *Bulletin* still encourages the novelist with its annual prize. From both magazines and anthologies it is clear that there is plenty of new talent.

The year's most notable book of verse was *Moles Do So Little With Their Privacy*, by "E.", a poet whose anonymity is carefully preserved by Miles Franklin. "E." is obviously both akin to and influenced by Emily Dickinson. Terse, dry, enigmatic with an occasional lyrical flow, "E.'s" verses are packed with thought, which gets its novelty mainly from the personality conveying it, a personality whose predominant notes are self-possession, remoteness and courage.

Except for *Disinherited*, by that old warrior Mary Gilmore (and that is not really an exception, because it belongs to 1941, but was accidentally omitted from our last summary), there was no other book of verse that matters much. Neither Rex Ingamells' *News of the Sun* nor Gina Ballantyne's *Phantom* quite succeeds. The verse of *Dramas of the Sky*, by Max Harris, that most perverse and irascible of Australian poets, is usually intelligible of one takes enough trouble, but the trouble is not always worth taking. Harris is obviously sincere, and his verse undoubtedly contains passages of poetry; but it is that of a poet who in his determination to discover an up to date and personal method of expression runs sometimes to obscure wrong-headedness. The best of a number of little booklets of verse that appeared during the year was Ethel Anderson's *Squatter's Luck*. There is a good deal that doesn't matter in these verses, and why Miss Anderson should take Eustace and Silas as names for presumably typical Australian bushmen it would be hard to say; but her verse

strikes at its best a note that is at the same time individual and Australian, and there is a rather attractive handling of polysyllables.

Of the anthologies—Flexmore Hudson's *Poetry*, *The Jindyworobak Anthology* and *Australian Poetry 1942*—the last is by far the best. Its 1942 editor was R. D. FitzGerald. The annual change encourages variety, and since the editor for the time being is not bound rigorously to his twelve months, if a good thing is missed in one year it may be picked up in the next. The Jindyworobaks have broadened their range, but both their anthology and Hudson's tend towards descriptive verse; the contents of *Australian Poetry 1942* are remarkably varied. As for the periodicals, *Southerly* stands as much to the right of the centre as the *Meanjin Papers* stand to the left, while *Angry Penguins* is away out on the left wing of modernism, though its attitude is a little reminiscent of a magazine dating back to the beginning of the First World War, Wyndham Lewis's *Blast*. *Meanjin* is much to be congratulated on its evolution during three years from a thin little leaflet of verse only to a solid but up to date magazine of forty pages, which contains much of the best Australian verse of the day. *Southerly* also is to be congratulated on establishing a solid position, if one of its contributors may say so.

All four plays of the year were three-acters, all have been staged with success, one is exceedingly clever, and none is without interest. Each is, however, in its own way conventional. Sumner Locke-Elliott's *Interval* is an accomplished example of the sophisticated type of the "best plays of the year". Its theme is the failure of a playwright and an actress under the strain of success. The play is well constructed and the characters and everything else are lifelike, but it is all familiar in type. The other plays are amateurish by comparison. Two are historico-romantic plays of the convict days, Dymphna Cusack's *Red Sky at Morning* and Katherine Shepherd's *Daybreak*. Miss Cusack's play, with its melodramatic villain and its rather sentimental hero and heroine, is as naïf as Locke-Elliott's is sophisticated. Miss Shepherd's play is not quite so conventional as Miss Cusack's, but it is even slighter, the characterisation is not so well marked, and the cruel and tyrannical father is rather overdrawn. Betty Roland's *A Touch of Silk* is much better, for though here again the young farmer ruined by drought, the hard-hearted mortgagee, the wife's self-sacrifice, are familiar in type, as individuals they are not so familiar. Also, the study of the French girl in her utterly incompatible surroundings is realistic, and one is made to feel the poignance of the tragedy, even if some of the elements in it are hard to accept.

Of the novels of the year, Eve Langley's *The Pea Pickers* has that quality of surprise that is often, though not invariably, a mark of new and exceptional talent. It is the story, told in the first person, and one would imagine largely autobiographical, of a girl who goes off with her sister apple-packing, hop-picking, pea-picking, all over

the Victorian countryside. Earning little, the sisters live as much as they can on their fellow workers, mostly Italians, and though often half starved, they have on the whole a splendid time. At first one is repelled by the sentimental egotism of the narrator, as much as one is attracted by her wit, humour and indefatigable adventurous vitality. But gradually the story's rich interest in character and incident and the writer's marked personality swing the balance over, so that one is not surprised that this long, crowded, undisciplined novel should have shared with Kylie Tennant's *The Battlers*, the *Bulletin's* prize for the best novel of the year.

Leonard Mann's *Go-Getter* has been as much underrated by the reviewers as *The Pea Pickers* has been overrated. It is a realistic story of hard times, hard luck and shady ways during the grey depression years, brightened only by the determination of the principal character and the sparks of human feeling and kindness that glow through the greyneess. Gavin Casey's collection of short stories, *It's Harder for Girls*, is an even greyer book, and this time the greyneess is almost unredeemed except by the continually unsuccessful aspiration of the character who runs through most of the stories. He is a miner, and it is always clear that ahead of him and his are inescapable decline and drab tragedy. Nevertheless these stories are powerful and compelling. Another book that may be mentioned is Sarah Campion's novel *Bonanza*. This is a second and better instalment of the adventurous life story of the young North Queensland pioneer who first appeared in *Mo Burdekin*. The story is told with realism and sardonic humour; it will be easier to judge with the final instalment, when it can be seen as a whole. Finally there must be mentioned Bernard O'Dowd's *Fantasies*, a thin booklet containing pieces of prose poetry reprinted from magazines of the early nineteen-hundreds.

*Coast to Coast*, Messrs. Angus & Robertson's annual prose anthology, edited in 1942 by Beatrice Davis, kept up its high reputation.

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## NOTES

IN the present state of the Association's finances, it will not be possible to publish the third issue of *Southerly* for the current year. This would be a calamity for Australian literary culture. Is the latest and most promising of Sydney's literary journals to suffer the fate of the others? Here is a challenge to those who still profess an interest in letters, art, and culture. At this stage of the financial year, it does not seem possible to get sufficient new members in time to ensure this year's issues—though all members should try at once to persuade others to join the Association.

It seems, then, that loyal supporters who are in a position to do so must come to the aid of the magazine. I have a guinea to start us off. If there are twenty-five others who think as I do and can give an equal amount, *Southerly's* life is guaranteed for the year.

H. L. McLOSKEY,  
Chairman, Executive Committee.

*Australian Poetry Queried.*—*Notes and Queries* for January 30 might almost be called a *Southerly* number. In its "Memorabilia" the greater part of the editorial from the September 1942 *Southerly* is reprinted, with approval; a passage is quoted, with some slight disagreement, from Mr. Hope's review of Lesbia Harford's poems, in the same number; while from Miss Franklin's notice of T. Inglis Moore's *Six Australian Poets* Mr. Moore's statement that "Australian poetry of the last century can hold its own, in its highest expressions, with any poetry written during the same period in the English tongue" is taken and denied. "Some years ago", writes Memorabilist, "we worked through a collection of Australian poetry, and found nothing better in it than stale Swinburne and second-hand Tennyson. No writer seemed 'individual, essentially different from every other'. We were wrong. We have now followed the indications which this number of *Southerly* gives us, and we find in the aforesaid anthology three poems by one poet, with one memorable quatrain by another writer. . . . C. J. Dennis's 'Songs of a Sentimental Bloke' (1915) is not represented in the anthology or mentioned in the magazine. We think we remember it as a commentary on human life not compiled out of commentaries. If so, it, with Lesbia Harford, and the three poems and one quatrain we have alluded to, are exceptional in Australian verse. The quatrain, of course, is Adam Lindsay Gordon's: 'Life is mostly froth and bubble', etc." Memorabilist ends: "There are other things in *Southerly* to praise and to contradict, but these we note elsewhere."

On page 77, under the heading "Some Notes on Donne", he quotes Mr. Milgate's "characterization of Donne's verse-writing", "which", he says, "I do not know how to better". Other statements, however, are

criticised; and it seems best to leave Mr. Milgate to answer the criticisms.

On page 90, in the course of a review of the late Virginia Woolf's *Death of the Moth, and Other Essays*, further mention of *Southerly* is found: "Australians read Virginia Woolf, i.e., they write of her in *Southerly* [the reference is to the April 1942 number]. Let them read her. Let those poets read her who will constitute the next anthology of Australian verse. . . . But let them go to this essay not alone for her encouragement . . . but for her exquisite reasons and wise counsels."

In the issue of *Notes and Queries* for February 13, *Memorabilist*, having found Mr. Moore's statement used as a motto to the Spring 1942 number of *Meanjin Papers*, returns to the attack. "We have considered", he writes, "whether we ought to have hedged, for certainly what is fine, what is perfect in its own kind, however small, is not shamed by what is great; and 'a poet is to be judged by his best, however little there is of it'. Still, fineness and perfection are not greatness, and even if Australian poetry is to be judged by its best poets, however few there are of them, our verdict must remain the same. When they boast we have to ask them: 'Can your poetry, in its highest expression, hold its own with Tennyson, with Browning, with Arnold—with 'Oenone', 'Tithonus', 'Love Among the Ruins', 'O Lyric Love', or 'Thyrsis'?"

Thus challenged, we must reply, but defence is not necessary. We would remind *Memorabilist* that in quoting Mr. Moore, Miss Franklin remarked: "He begins gamely." Not all Australians will go so far as Mr. Moore, and doubtless *Meanjin Papers* adopted his words as a motto mainly for the purpose of provocation. Whatever justification there is for them will, however, be found in Mr. Moore's book, which we suggest *Memorabilist* read; and with it, not—what he seems to have done—*The Oxford Book of Australasian Verse*, which most Australians deplore, as a poor selection and also as one long out of date, but Percival Serle's *An Australasian Anthology*, published by Collins in 1927, and the forthcoming anthologies by Mr. H. M. Green and Dr. George Mackaness. He may then see some reason to revise his impression of Australian poetry, acknowledging not only the length of its tradition but also its richness and strength, with its occasional approaches to greatness. No other Dominion literature is fuller, more varied and securer in achievement than ours. Comparison with the literature of England is another matter.

R.G.H.

*Mayakovsky* (see the April number).—Under the title of *Mayakovsky and his Poetry*, a selection of translations, compiled by Herbert Marshall, was published recently by the Pilot Press, London. The book forms the third in a new series called *Life and Literature in the Soviet Union*.

*Poetry*, the quarterly of Australian and New Zealand verse, is to pay contributors at a flat rate of 10s. a poem, and payment will be increased from time to time as the circulation grows. The annual subscription is to remain 4s. 6d., and single copies 1s. 6d. each. All manuscripts should be sent direct to the Editor, *Poetry*, Lucindale, South Australia.

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## THE AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

### ANNUAL REPORT, 1942

FACED with unpredictable possibilities at the beginning of the year, it is with considerable satisfaction that, at its close, we can present an Annual Report showing no small measure of achievement as regards the Association's cultural activities, and, as will be seen from the Treasurer's statement, an improvement on the financial side.

This is, in part, due to the generosity of the Commissioners of the Rural Bank in allowing us the use of its Conference Hall free of rental, for which we wish to express our thanks and appreciation.

On the enforcement of "brown-out" conditions at night the Committee decided that it would be preferable to change the time of the monthly meetings to the afternoons, but one must admit a feeling of disappointment that the attendances at the various meetings have been smaller than they should have been.

It is discouraging to the speakers and committee alike when their efforts meet with less than their due reward. May we appeal to members to attend in greater numbers during the coming year?

The Annual General Meeting was held on 29th April, 1942. Mr. McLoskey presided.

The Annual Report and the Annual Balance Sheet were read and adopted and the office-bearers for 1942 were elected.

On the conclusion of the formal business a reading of original verse was given by Miss Rosemary Dobson and Mr. A. E. Ashworth.

The Annual Dinner was held at the Millions Club on the 19th November, a large number of members attending. Mr. McLoskey presided.

The toast of "The Association" was proposed by the Hon. Mr. Justice Maxwell, and Dr. A. H. McDonald replied.

"Australian Literature" was proposed by Miss Beatrice Davis and was replied to by Miss Elisabeth Lambert.

For the continued and increasing success of *Southerly*, the Association must, once again, express its thanks and congratulations to Mr. Howarth and Dr. Mitchell.

During the year the following addresses were given:

*April*.—Miss Thelma Herring, M.A.: "Modern American Drama."

*May*.—Mr. W. Milgate, B.A.: "The Importance of John Donne."

*June*.—Miss Nuri Mass, M.A.: "*Between the Acts*—Virginia Woolf's Last Novel."

*July*.—Mr. Clement Hosking, President of the Gaelic Society of Australia. "Hebridean Lore and Legend", illustrated with songs from the Hebrides.

*September*.—Miss Kitty Barnes: "Thomas Wolfe." Mr. Muir Holburn: "William Saroyan."

*October*.—Mr. W. Lennard, M.A.: "Let's Go to the Dogs." Mr. C. J. H. O'Brien, B.A.: "Melodrama in Dickens." Mr. R. G. Howarth, B.A., B.Litt.: "Verse Vices."

*November*.—Miss Joan Mackaness, B.A.: "Folk Songs of English Origin", with examples.

**AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH ASSOCIATION**  
**Income and Expenditure Account for year ending 31st December, 1942**

INCOME.				EXPENDITURE.			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
1942.				<i>Southerly:</i>			
Jan.				Printing (two)	47	7	6
1. Credit Balance			3	Postage	2	11	3
1. Members' Subscriptions			42	Editorial Expenses	2	5	6
2. Publications:			2				
<i>Southerly:</i>				<i>Recorder:</i>			
Sales	10	4	5	Printing			
Donations	20	8	0	Administration			
Subscriptions	3	19	6	Secretary, Stationery, etc.	1	13	6
Advertisements	6	6	0	Postage	4	0	0
	40	17	11	Treasurer	3	0	0
Other Publications:							
"Julius Caesar"	1	14	3	Rent	8	13	6
"Macbeth"	6	13	6	English Association, London:	1	10	0
"Pron. of English"	2	14	6	Levy £7, Exchange 18s.			
Sundries	1	13	6	Refunds (Overpaid Subscriptions)	7	18	0
	12	15	9	Bank Charges	16	0	
3. Miscellaneous:				Sundries:	14	2	
Donations	11	0		Dinner			
Dinner	11	16	6	Incidental, do.	£12	1	6
Afternoon Teas	2	2	9	Afternoon Teas	15	0	
	14	10	3		2	6	6
	68	3	11		15	3	0
				December 31st Credit Balance,	89	2	5
				Commercial Bank	25	3	0
					£114	5	5

**Supplementary Statements.**  
**COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANK.**

		1942.	
		£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1942.	1. Credit Balance	7 14 2	8 0 10
Jan.	31. Interest .. ..	6 8	.. ..
May	31. Credit Balance .. ..	£8 0 10	£8 0 10
Dec.	31. .. ..		

**General Fund—Summary, 1942**

RECEIPTS.		EXPENDITURE.	
		£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Members' Subscriptions .. ..	42 2 0	Postages, etc. .. ..	11 19 3
Other Sources .. ..	68 3 11	Other .. ..	77 3 2
		Profit as per Cash Book subject to liability for	89 2 5
		December <i>Southerly</i> .. ..	21 3 6
			£110 5 11

**Reconciliation with Bank Statements.**

		1942.	
		£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1942.	Credit Balance—		
Jan. 1.	Commercial Bank .. ..	3 19 6	25 3 0
	Commonwealth G.S.B. .. ..	7 14 2	.. ..
	Profit, General Account as per Cash		.. ..
	Book .. ..	21 3 6	8 0 10
	Commonwealth G.S. Bank, Interest ..	6 8	
		£33 3 10	£33 3 10

Certified correct:

FRED. T. BERMAN, Hon. Treasurer, 16/1/43.  
Audited and found correct:  
A. COUSINS & WARWICK M. CLARKE, 25/1/43.